

Stūpa Worship and *Dharma* Evaluation in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*

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1. Background of this paper

In Buddhism, there has long been a general recognition that the Buddha Śākyamuni, who is a historical person, still ‘continues to live’ in some form even after his ‘death (*parinirvāṇa*)’. *Stūpa* worship in which the *stūpa* is equated with ‘the living Buddha’ and is not regarded as merely ‘Buddha’s grave’, also stems from this general recognition.

It has been already shown that the early Mahāyāna movement involves the intention of shifting the central focus of Buddhism from *stūpa* worship to *dharma* evaluation, that is, the intention of shifting the conception of ‘the living Buddha’ from *stūpa* to *dharmakāya* (Buddha having a body composed of *dharma*) or to *dharma* itself. This shift was, however, carried out in some moderate manner and was not attained completely since *stūpa* worship was one of the chief fundamentals of the early Mahāyāna movement. Full devaluation of *stūpa* worship and a complete shift to *dharma* evaluation was just declared in the *sūtras* such as the *Mahāmeghasūtra* (*MMS*), which could utilize the early Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature as their new foundation instead of *stūpa* worship.

In the second chapter of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtreṇḍarāja* (*Suv*), entitled the *Tathāgatāyuhpramāṇanirdeśaparivarta*, there exists a long series of passages concerning the idea of the Buddha. This idea can be summarized as follows : “The Buddha is composed of *dharma* and the meaning of the *stūpa*/relics is absolutely nothing.” The present author has already proved that the *Suv* quotes these passages from the *MMS* (see Suzuki [1996, 1998a, 1998b]) and also elucidated how the attitude toward both *stūpa* and *dharma* in the second chapter of the *Suv* altered along the variously phased compilation of the *Suv* from the first Chinese version (C₁), through the present Sanskrit recension (S), the Tibetan version well-corresponding to S (T₁),

the second Chinese version (C₂), the enlarged Tibetan version (T₂), to the third Chinese version (C₃) (see Suzuki [1999]). In this paper, we shall attempt to extend the range of examination into the *Suv* entirely and consider the various phases of the conception of the *stūpa*/relics in the *Suv* in order to prepare for the further research into the conception of the Buddha in the *Suv*. (The way of numbering the chapters in this paper follows expediently the way in C₃.)

2. Various phases of the attitude toward *stūpa*/relics in the *Suv*

① Chapter II has four phases (C₁ < S, T₁ < C₂ < T₂, C₃). The 1st phase simply teaches the eternity of the Buddha. The 2nd phase, as has been noted previously, quotes a long series of passages from the *MMS* and devaluates *stūpa* worship completely. This attitude toward *stūpa* is still followed by the 3rd phase, but the last 4th phase, on the contrary, accepts once again *stūpa* worship which must have been completely devaluated through the former three phases. (For further details, see Suzuki [1999].)

② Chapter XXIV has two phases (C₁ (=C₂), S, T₁ (=T₂) < C₃), but the attitude toward *stūpa* remains unchanged. At the beginning of the chapter, a *stūpa* arose from the ground. This *stūpa* contains the relics of a *bodhisattva* named Mahāsattva, who is now Śākyamuni and had sacrificed himself for a tigress tortured by hunger and thirst. Having encouraged the audience to worship the *stūpa*/relics, the Buddha began to expound religious discourse on his sacrifice. It is true that we might estimate this chapter to propose *stūpa* worship only at first glance, but this estimation shall be denied by the following description stated at the end of this chapter :

While this exposition was being expounded, innumerable beings ... raised their thought to supreme and perfect enlightenment. And this is the reason, this the cause of the revelation of this *stūpa* here. And that *stūpa*, through the Buddha's blessing, entered the ground at that very spot.

(S 240.6-9; Emmerick [1996] 100.)

We can say that it is not the *stūpa* itself but the exposition of *dharma* that encouraged people to raise their thought to enlightenment and the *stūpa* works as one of the 'stage effects' to lead the exposition. This kind of function of *stūpa* can be also observed in the *Stūpasamdarśanaparivarta*, the 11th chapter of the *Sad-dharmapuṇḍarīka* belonging to the early Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature, which had the intention of shifting the focus from *stūpa* worship to *dharma* evaluation. (see Suzuki

[2000]]

③ Chapter XXII keeps almost the same contents throughout the compilation. The following citation is from the utterance of the Buddha :

“[Having approached the place where this *sūtra* is preached,] then he must enter, by entry into *dharmadhātu*, where there is the *stūpa* whose nature is *dharmā* (*dharmātmakastūpa*), profound, well-established. And in the midst of this *stūpa* he will see the Buddha Śākyamuni expounding this *sūtra* in a pleasant voice. ... All the gods continually honor the inconceivable *stūpa* of *dharmā* (*dharmastūpa*). ... Because of a purified merit-root these men have come here, who have come here in order to hear this profound *sūtra*, venerable men with inconceivable devotion to the *stūpa* of *dharmā* (*dharmastūpa*). They have compassion for the world. They are working for the welfare of beings.” (S 156.5-159.10 ; Emmerick [1996] 68-70.)

Taking into account both the context and two words ‘*dharmātmakastūpa*’ meaning ‘the *stūpa* whose nature is *dharmā*’, and ‘*dharmastūpa*’ which has the same meaning as the former, we can see that this citation proposes that true nature of the *stūpa* should be sought in *dharmā* rather than in the *stūpa* itself. Furthermore, we can notice that the attitude toward *stūpa* worship of this chapter is the same as that of the early Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature since both of them, while not denying *stūpa* worship completely, share the intention of shifting the focus from *stūpa* worship to *dharmā* evaluation.

④ Chapter XVIII has two phases ($C_1 (=C_2)$, S, $T_1 (=T_2) < C_3$), and description on *stūpa* worship can be observed only in the 2nd phase (C_3) :

[The earth-goddess Dṛdhā addressed the Lord :] “I have special spells (**dhāraṇī*), O Lord, and can benefit all sentient beings. ... Those who wish welfare or wealth and so on should adorn a purified room, purify themselves, put on purified garments and sit on the seat. Then they should honor the *stūpa* (or *caitya*), in which the relics (**śarīra*, *dhātu*) is deposited, with perfumes, flowers and foods.” (C_3 440c21-441a1)

This citation may tell us that *stūpa* worship has already become one of the daily events in this phase and is accepted to the same or larger extent than in the 4th phase of Chapter II.

⑤ Chapter V only exists in T_2 , C_2 and C_3 with its contents almost unchanged, we may thus say that this chapter itself is one of the latest phases in the compilation of the *Suv.*

[The Lord addressed Śāriputra :] “Suppose that some young man or lady of good family honors the *pratyekabuddhas* with garments and foods and so on, and that after their entering into *parinirvāṇa* he or she builds a *stūpa* (or *caitya*) for them ten *yojanas* in height which is made of gold and silver and so on and honors it with every umbrella and flag. Do you think, O Śāriputra, that he or she will produce much pious merit?”

[Śāriputra replied :] “Yes, Lord ; yes, Sugata.”

[The Lord said :] “Any young man or lady of good family, O Śāriputra, who shall keep, comprehend, read, explain to others this *sūtra* and raise his or her mind to perfect enlightenment, that young man or lady of good family will produce far more pious merit.” (T 232.28-233.15)

Needless to say, we find the same kind of assertion in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* which is one of the representative early Mahāyāna *sūtras* ; the assertion that *stūpa* is still precious but *dharma* is much more precious.

⑥ Chapter VI, in the same way as Chapter V, only exists in T₂, C₂ and C₃ with its contents almost unchanged.

[Assemblies said:] “We will approach the place, O Lord, where this excellent *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, king of *sūtras*, is being expounded. Having approached the place we will become the audience of the preacher. We will protect, satisfy and honor him. ... For, the place where this *dharma* is expounded is *caitya* (*chos 'di bśad pa'i gnas 'di ni mchod rten lags*). It must be therefore honored with umbrellas, flags, flowers, perfumes and ornaments.” (T 259.3-17)

None of us may read this citation without recalling the phrase ‘sa prthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet’ in the *Vajracchedikā*, which is one of the early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, though this citation does not mention ‘*caityabhūta*’ but ‘*caitya*’ directly. It may be thus true to estimate that ⑥ shows a more developed form than the *Vajracchedikā* on account of the loss of the word ‘*bhūta*’. Compared with the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, however, which identifies the preacher itself, not the place, with *caitya* and tries to introduce the *tathāgatagarbha* theory (see Shimoda [1993, 1997]), we must say that the extent of the development appeared in ⑥ is somewhat trivial.

3. Explanation of the various attitudes toward *stūpa*/relics in the *Suv*

Various attitudes toward *stūpa*/relics in the *Suv* can be summarized as follows :

Similar to the early Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> (from <i>stūpa</i> to <i>dharma</i>)	The 1st phase of ① ; ②③⑤⑥ (②③ are the 1st and last phases ; ⑤⑥ are the last phases)
Full devaluation of <i>stūpa</i> worship	The 2nd and 3rd phase of ①

Acceptance and encouragement of <i>stūpa</i> worship	The 4th phase of ① and the 2nd phase of ④ (both are the last phases)
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Table 1. Various attitudes toward *stūpa*/relics in the *Suv*

We should not overlook here that in the last phase of the compilation of the *Suv* there coexist two opposite attitudes toward *stūpa* worship ; one, like the early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, devaluates it and the other encourages it. This means that even in the last phase there may have been no agreement among the proponents of the *Suv* either on what they considered the Buddha to be and on what form of the Buddha they believed in. What may draw our attention is the fact that the *Suv* was compiled and has been maintained as a single text in spite of the discordance of the thought and the faith, both of which must be essential to the Buddhist. It is not so strange that the theme or editorial plan of one *sūtra* is changing during the compilation, but as to the *Suv* two declarations which contradict each other on both the thought and the faith were added in the same phase, that is, almost at the same time in the compilation, and they have been continued to coexist without one being eliminated by the other.

We may have to notice here the hypothesis that the change of definition of the *saṃghabheda* (from *cakrabheda* to *karmabheda*) must have caused the variety of the Buddhist forms including the Mahāyāna (see Sasaki [2000]) for the sake of explaining sufficiently the various attitudes toward *stūpa*/relics in the *Suv*. There is also the possibility that the *Suv* can illustrate the validity of this hypothesis. In further research into the conception of the Buddha in the *Suv* by the present author, this possibility will be examined in detail.

〈Texts, Abbreviations and References〉 had to be omitted for want of space.

〈Key Words〉 金光明經, 仏塔・仏舎利信仰, 大雲經, 涅槃經, 法華經

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